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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
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Follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum

Expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)"

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)" was held in New York from 19 to 21 January 2016. The secretariat of the Permanent Forum transmits herewith the report of the meeting.

* E/C.19/2016/1.

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Report of the expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)"

I. Introduction

1. At its fourteenth session, held from 20 April to 1 May 2015, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues recommended that the Economic and Social Council authorize a three-day international expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)". At its 54th plenary meeting, on 22 July 2015, the Council decided to authorize an international expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)" (see Council decision 2015/248), with the participation of members of the Permanent Forum, representatives of indigenous experts, interested Member States, the United Nations system and other interested intergovernmental organizations. It also requested that the results of the meeting be reported to the Permanent Forum at its fifteenth session. The meeting was organized by the secretariat of the Permanent Forum, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The programme of work is attached as annex I.

II. Organization of work

A. Attendance

2. The following members of the Permanent Forum attended the expert group meeting:

Megan Davis, Chair

Dalee Sambo Dorough

Edward John

Oliver Loode

Aisa B. Mukabenova

Mohammad Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi

Mariam Wallet Aboubakrine

3. The following experts from United Nations mechanisms relevant to the rights of indigenous peoples attended the expert group meeting:

Alexey Tsykarev, Chair, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Wilton Littlechild, Member, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Francisco Cali Tzay, Chair, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

4. The following experts participated in the expert group meeting:

Mathura Bikash Tripura (Asia)

Tatiana Degai (Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia)

Richard Grounds (North America)

Sandra Inutiq (Arctic)

Amy D. Kalili (Pacific)

Elisa Loncon Antileo (Central and South America and the Caribbean)

5. The expert group meeting was attended by observers from Member States, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, indigenous peoples' organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The list of participants is contained in annex II.

B. Documentation

6. The participants had before them a programme of work and documents prepared by the participating experts. The documents for the expert group meeting are listed in annex III. The documentation is also available on the website of the secretariat of the Permanent Forum: www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/.

C. Opening of the meeting

7. At the opening of the expert group meeting, the Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, made a statement welcoming everyone to the meeting. The Chair of the Permanent Forum delivered opening remarks highlighting the importance of indigenous languages and initiatives that are currently taking place to ensure their survival. The Chief of the secretariat of the Permanent Forum also welcomed the regional experts and the representatives of Member States and the United Nations system and outlined the objectives of the meeting. Remarks were delivered by members of the Permanent Forum on the urgency of saving indigenous languages to protect the cultural identity and dignity of indigenous peoples and safeguard their traditional heritage.

D. Election of officers

8. The Chair of the Permanent Forum, Megan Davis, was elected the Chair of the meeting and Jennifer Rubis of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was elected Rapporteur.

E. Recommendations

9. The recommendations are contain . J in section V below.

III. Background

10. Conservative estimates suggest that more than half of the world's languages will become extinct by 2100 (see E/C.19/2005/7). Other equally realistic estimates predict that up to 95 per cent of the world's languages may become extinct or seriously endangered by the end of the present century. At present, 96 per cent of the world's approximately 6,700 languages are spoken by only 3 per cent of the world's population. The vast majority of the languages that are under threat are indigenous languages, and most of them would disappear according to these estimates.

11. This pressing threat has been described as the most critical issue that indigenous peoples face today. This is because indigenous languages are not only methods of communication but also extensive and complex systems of knowledge that have developed over millenniums. They are central to the identity of indigenous peoples, the preservation of their cultures, worldviews and visions and an expression of self-determination. Indigenous languages are critical markers of the cultural health of indigenous peoples. When indigenous languages are under threat, so too are indigenous peoples themselves.

12. The threat is the direct result of colonialism and colonial practices that resulted in the decimation of indigenous peoples, their cultures and their languages. Through policies of assimilation, forced relocation, boarding schools and other colonial and post-colonial policies, laws and actions, indigenous languages in all regions face the threat of extinction. It is further exacerbated by globalization and the rise of a small number of culturally dominant languages, which has led to a situation in which, in some indigenous communities, the indigenous language is no longer transmitted by parents to their children and is no longer used on a daily basis. Nevertheless, indigenous children have a right to learn in their indigenous mother tongue and to use the language of their ancestors.

13. In the absence of immediate and concerted action, the world is entering a major linguistic and cultural extinction event, on a scale with major extinction events of the past in which a majority of the world's species have become extinct. This event, however, is man-made and is exacerbated by ongoing assimilationist policies that emphasize a model of a homogenous nation State that shares one culture and one language.

14. The situation is critical. Since its creation, the Permanent Forum has shown its concern for indigenous languages and shared this concern with the United Nations system and Member States. The Permanent Forum has consistently emphasized the importance of providing indigenous children with quality education in their indigenous mother tongue. Learning in that mother tongue not only strengthens the ability of indigenous children to communicate in their own language but also benefits their overall academic achievements and lowers dropout rates. Furthermore a strong foundation in the indigenous language has been shown to benefit the ability of those children to learn the dominant non-indigenous language used where they live.

15. In recognition of the dire situation of indigenous languages, the Permanent Forum recommended that the United Nations organize an expert group meeting on indigenous languages in 2008. That meeting made a number of important recommendations to the United Nations system and Member States, many of which were endorsed by the Permanent Forum at its seventh session.

16. Indigenous languages continue to die out. It has been estimated that one indigenous language dies every two weeks (see E/C.19/2005/7). This estimate may be conservative. For that reason, the Permanent Forum recommended a second international expert group meeting on indigenous languages to galvanize action at the international and national levels, to raise awareness of the impending and ongoing loss of traditional knowledge, cultural heritage and linguistic diversity and to identify specific policy advice and methodologies that Member States, with the assistance of the United Nations system, can use without delay.

IV. Highlights of the discussion

17. Participants emphasized that any efforts to promote and revitalize indigenous languages must be owned by indigenous peoples themselves; they could not wait for States or the United Nations to provide them with the resources needed to save their languages. That is not to say that States do not have obligations. For example, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes the right of everyone to education and the Convention on the Rights of the Child creates binding obligations to ensure the right of children to education but also regular attendance at school encourage by States and a reduction of dropout rates. If the teaching language is foreign to the child, then the child does not have access to education.

18. Furthermore, article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures and that States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected. Article 14 states that indigenous individuals, especially children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State and that States shall take measures to ensure that indigenous peoples have access to an education in their own culture and language. Some participants emphasized the need for fluency in indigenous languages as an important element in ensuring their continuation and survival.

19. Despite the formal recognition of these obligations, indigenous languages continue to face extinction, and it is incumbent upon indigenous peoples themselves to reverse this trend and to revitalize their own languages. Indigenous peoples around the world are doing so, often with limited resources, little or no outside support and in an environment in which a few major languages dominate the cultural and linguistic landscape, while they work to overcome decades or centuries of destructive policies and legislation.

20. Participants raised concerns about the policies and actions of colonialism; the dispossession of lands, territories and resources; and repression and forced assimilation to destroy their cultures, including indigenous languages, with the intention of depriving indigenous peoples of their integrity as distinct peoples and their dignity, security, well-being and human rights. There is a need to strengthen

the willingness and ability of States to protect indigenous peoples' rights through effective mechanisms for prevention and redress, in accordance to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other international human rights law.

21. Participants expressed concern at the lack of available data on the status of indigenous languages at the national level. Some noted with surprise that there was no accurate estimate of how many indigenous languages there were in the world at present. This situation results in part from the fact that there is no internationally agreed definition of the terms "indigenous" or "language" and that the distinction between a language and a dialect is not always straightforward and can often be politicized.

22. Of greater concern is the limited information available on the status of indigenous languages at the national level in many countries. Participants noted that many countries did not collect any data on the situation of indigenous languages and that, when they did, the methods were faulty. Census questions often fail to accurately reflect to what degree an indigenous language is spoken and used. For this reason census offices must endeavour to work in cooperation with indigenous peoples when conducting censuses and other data collection enterprises, not only in their implementation but also at all stages, including their development.

23. The meeting benefited from a wealth of examples of language initiatives and revitalization efforts led by indigenous peoples. In Hawaii, for example, after decades of destructive language policies and native language deterioration, native Hawaiians have taken ownership of Hawaiian medium education.[1] In the 1970s, the Hawaiian language was on the brink of extinction, spoken only by elders and a small population on the isolated island of Niihau. In 1978, a state constitutional convention re-established the status of Hawaiian as an official language of the State of Hawaii. A few years ago, the non-profit organization 'Aha Pūnana Leo was established, and it has led the movement to revitalize Hawaiian as a living language of children, families and communities through the re-establishment of Hawaiian medium education. The Hawaiian medium educational system serves learners from the age of 9 months through the university level in Hawaiian-language college programmes at the University of Hawaii at Hilo.

24. The situation is far different for the Yuchi language in the United States of America, where only four Yuchi-speaking elders remain and for whom Yuchi is their first language. They are all over 90 years old. This situation requires a different strategy than the one used, for example, in Hawaii. By working closely with the Yuchi-speaking elders, the Yuchi Language Project follows immersion methods and has successfully developed a dozen Yuchi speakers, for whom Yuchi is a second language. This small-scale grass-roots work is enjoying some success, in particular because it links Yuchi youth not only to their language but also to what the language means. In his paper presented at the expert group meeting, Richard Grounds stated

[1] Hawaiian medium educations is defined as a learning environment in which the coursework, regardless of content, is taught entirely in the Hawaiian language and all those on the campus, including administrative and support staff, fulfil their roles and duties using the Hawaiian language. See Amy D. Kalili, paper presented at the expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)", 19 to 21 January 2016. Available from: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/egm/Paper_Amy_Kalili2.pdf.

that "[i]ndigenous languages are the core, the beating heart of our peoples, cultures and identities. Our languages tell us who we are. It is through our languages that we speak our worlds into existence. It is through our languages that we know how to live in this world."[2]

25. These are some of the benefits that indigenous languages offer indigenous children and students. They provide them with a sense of identity and a worldview that speaks to them in a way that the dominant language cannot do. This is important, given the major obstacles to the revitalization of endangered languages.

26. Indigenous peoples living in urban areas face even greater challenges to maintaining and revitalizing their languages. In Chile, for example, there exist both legislation and policies aimed at protecting the nine indigenous languages in the country.[3] However, the legal framework is insufficient, allowing for the instruction of only four of the languages and only when there is a presence of more than 20 per cent of indigenous students in schools. According to the national socioeconomic survey, in 2009 only 12 per cent of the indigenous population spoke and understood an indigenous language, and most of those who did were over 60 years old. In Chile, the majority of indigenous peoples live in urban areas, where they are a small minority and public education offers little or no education in the indigenous language. However, cities also provide opportunities. For example, indigenous organizations have established urban microcentres for cultural practices, such as the Ruka Mapuche or the Mapuche house that provides space for ceremonies, workshops and intercultural education. There is also increasing cooperation with universities that offer indigenous language courses. However, financial resources and teaching materials are very limited.

27. The revitalization efforts of the Itelmen language in Kamchatka, Russian Federation, show the important interplay between the Government and indigenous peoples in revitalizing languages.[4] The Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) recognizes the right to preserve and learn native languages and the Kamchatkan State government has initiated various native language development programmes, such as indigenous language classes in school and mass media broadcasts, as well as culture and language awareness-raising, competitions and publications. However, the impact of those initiatives is limited, although they have had a positive effect on increasing the prestige of indigenous languages. On the other hand, strong community-led language revitalization initiatives have been able to reach further and, at the same time, make use of new technological opportunities. In that regard, online music channels with subtitled recordings of indigenous language songs (Itelmen karaoke) and an application for smartphones to facilitate language discussion groups in Itelmen have been useful.

[2] Available from: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/egm/Paper_Grounds2.pdf.

[3] Elisa Loncon Antileo, paper presented at the expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)", 19 to 21 January 2016. Available from: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/egm/Paper_Loncon2.pdf.

[4] Tatiana Degai, paper presented at the expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)", 19 to 21 January 2016. Available from: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/egm/Paper_Degai2.pdf.

28. In Bangladesh, the right to education in one's mother tongue has been one of the key demands of the indigenous peoples' political movement. Although the Constitution only recognizes Bengali as the national and official language, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord of 1997 recognizes the rights of indigenous children to an education in their indigenous mother tongue. While government rules, regulations and policies have gradually been developed towards the overall aim of introducing indigenous languages into the government education system, implementation and progress has been extremely slow. As a result, most indigenous children are taught in a language that they do not know, and the result is a dropout rate of more than 60 per cent in primary schools.[5]

29. Indigenous peoples' organizations in Bangladesh have taken the lead in addressing the urgent need for access to education through various initiatives, such as the establishment of multilingual pre-primary centres, which, in the first year, provide education only in the mother tongue and, in the second year, introduce children to Bengali. A central aspect of the success of the multilingual pre-primary centres has been the strong focus on consultations with and ownership of communities in terms of managing the pre-primary centres, choosing the teachers and reviewing the development of the teaching material. The multilingual pre-primary centres have been taken up by the Government as a successful model for inclusive education in the mother tongue, with the purpose of replicating the initiative more broadly.

30. Participants also heard from the experience of Nunavut in Northern Canada, where important legal and administrative advances have been made to recognize, protect and revitalize the Inuit language.[6] These include the Official Languages Act, the Inuit Language Protection Act and the Education Act (all from 2008). These laws have allowed for the expansion of bilingual education from kindergarten to the twelfth grade, the establishment of a language commissioner to safeguard language rights, funding mechanisms for community revitalization efforts and partnerships with Nunavut Arctic College on a centre of excellence in the Inuit language. Nevertheless, challenges to implementation exist, owing in part to negative perceptions of the Inuit language, limited funding and a lack of bilingual teachers. There are also limited teaching resources available in the Inuit language, and more work is needed to develop training for teachers.

31. In addition to the government initiatives, language revitalization in Nunavut has been driven by strong grass-roots and private sector engagement with initiatives, such as language immersion programmes, bilingual publishing firms and an extensive film and media industry in the Inuit language, as well as various academic programmes such as a Ph.D. in the Inuit language offered by the University of Prince Edward Island.

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[5] Mathura Bikash Tripura, paper presented at the expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)", 19 to 21 January 2016. Available from: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/egm/Paper_Mathura2.pdf.

[6] Sandra Inutiq, paper presented at the expert group meeting on the theme "Indigenous languages: preservation and revitalization (articles 13, 14 and 16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)", 19 to 21 January 2016. Available from: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/2016/egm/Paper_Inutiq2.pdf.

32. Although the situation of indigenous languages differs greatly according to the legal and policy environment and the number of fluent speakers and qualified teachers, the examples provided all point to the need for indigenous ownership of any efforts to maintain, strengthen and revitalize indigenous languages. Of equal importance is the fact that limited specialized instruction in the indigenous language is not sufficient to bolster those efforts, especially when the language is not transferred intergenerationally. Indigenous women play a primary role in that regard, given their daily interactions with their children who are under school age. The indigenous mother tongue must be taught as the language of instruction at school, where all education is provided to indigenous children in their indigenous mother tongue. One example was the Kahnawà:ke Education Center in the Mohawk territory on the border of Canada and the United States of America, where initial language revitalization efforts in 1970 allowed for 15 minutes of Kanien'kéha instruction each day. By the end of the decade, the community had determined that full immersion of Kanien'kéha was required for their children. At present, there are approximately 200 first-language speakers in the community.

33. Participants were informed that some indigenous languages were transnational or cross-border, such as in the Amazonian basin, where indigenous children reach school age speaking two or more languages. This means that there is an ever greater need for access to a quality education in indigenous mother tongues.

34. For example, participants discussed the findings of the truth and reconciliation commission in Canada that detailed the history, going back more than 100 years, of residential schools that took indigenous children away from their parents and communities for the purpose of destroying their connection to their cultures and languages. Those practices were based on an ideology that viewed indigenous peoples and their cultures as inferior or "savage" and that promotes having indigenous peoples assimilated to a degree that would render them indistinguishable from the dominant population and destroy their distinct languages, traditions and cultures destroyed. In those schools, children were punished for speaking their indigenous mother tongue. Participants from other regions recalled similar experiences of boarding schools in their regions. Although Australia and Canada have made historic formal apologies for the treatment at those residential schools, the negative consequences of such processes remain with indigenous peoples. The damage that they inflicted on children, families and entire peoples is immeasurable and they have contributed directly to the language crisis that indigenous peoples around the world are facing.

35. Participants discussed the potential for information and communications technology (ICT) to promote indigenous languages and facilitate language revitalization efforts. Through mobile devices, access to the Internet has become more common, allowing for improved communication, increased access to information and the promotion of literacy and economic opportunities.

36. In particular, it is technologically feasible and relatively cheap to develop the software necessary, including fonts and virtual keyboards, to allow for writing in indigenous languages using indigenous alphabets. Doing so would open the door for indigenous peoples to create content, such as web pages, online dictionaries and language learning apps, online radio stations and publications, as well as recordings, videos and other media, in their own language.

37. ICT provides different opportunities with regard to different indigenous languages, especially on the basis of size differences. For example, the Cherokee language, spoken by approximately 20,000 people, is supported by computer operating systems and even has e-mail and social media interfaces, in addition to virtual keyboards, that allow any mobile phone user or computer user to read and write using the Cherokee alphabet. This technology is often developed through active communities, where technology companies use crowdsourcing to translate.

38. Crowdsourcing is not an option for the Yuchi revitalization efforts, in which only four Yuchi-speaking elders remain, nor is it viable for hundreds of other indigenous languages of which very few speakers remain and in which efforts are ongoing to save those languages before the last speakers pass away. ICT may, however, assist in other ways, especially through the development of solutions initiated and devised by indigenous peoples. However, those solutions are not applicable to all situations.

39. ICT can also have a negative impact on indigenous languages. It can expose indigenous cultures to media, such as television, radio, videos and games, from dominant cultures and in dominant languages, against which can be difficult to compete and can reduce the perceived value of the indigenous mother tongue. An increased reliance on technology can also have a negative effect on the interaction between younger and older generations.

40. Participants also discussed the issue of ownership. Many indigenous peoples are concerned, on the basis of their experience of cultural appropriation, that ICT may be used in ways that are disrespectful of their customs and worldviews. Participants cited examples of past practices in which indigenous languages had not been recorded in a manner appropriate to their beliefs and emphasized, in that regard, the importance of indigenous ownership of any indigenous language efforts. Another concern is that a focus on technology may divert limited financial resources from tried and tested language immersion efforts towards the development of websites or applications that may have limited or no value in generating new speakers.

41. Nevertheless, ICT allows indigenous practitioners to push for new, innovative technologies that can allow indigenous peoples to actively engage in language by speaking or singing it, rather than focusing on standardization efforts and working in text. Indigenous peoples can better exploit voice recognition, videoconferencing and the ubiquitous nature of audio and video recorders to come up with new indigenous solutions. Doing so may involve partnerships with the private sector. These considerations are particularly important, given that most indigenous peoples will most likely never have the human or financial resources for the establishment of schools that provide a holistic education in the indigenous mother tongue. Indigenous peoples must explore all the different tools available to them to maintain their languages, and technology may allow them to use their language and allow for indigenous populations away from home to remain better connected to their language communities.

V. Recommendations

Indigenous peoples

42. Indigenous peoples, as the rightful owners and custodians of their own languages, are encouraged to develop awareness-raising campaigns aimed at Governments, legislators, policymakers, educators and society in general to address commonly held misconceptions and a general lack of awareness about indigenous peoples' languages. Such campaigns could, inter alia:

(a) Emphasize the benefits of providing indigenous children, as well as other age groups, with a quality education in their indigenous mother tongue with the goal of attaining fluency. Providing an education in the indigenous mother tongue improves educational outcomes, reduces dropout rates and is a right that is enshrined in article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(b) Highlight that indigenous languages are intrinsically valuable to their speakers and their cultures, not only as methods of communication but also as repositories of traditional knowledge that are important for understanding and sustaining biological diversity and providing important contributions to sustainable development;

(c) Enhance the status and acceptability of indigenous languages, thereby demonstrating to indigenous children and youth that indigenous languages are "cool" and that the daily use of indigenous languages is normal and natural, as well as an enriching experience;

(d) Promote the cognitive benefits of multilingual and bilingual speakers. These benefits are enjoyed not only by indigenous communities but also by all of society. It is recognized that multilingual and bilingual speakers are cognitively and intellectually better prepared to contribute to the development of their societies.

43. These awareness-raising campaigns should be supported, in particular financially, by national and local Governments, relevant United Nations entities, including UNESCO and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as the Permanent Forum.

44. Indigenous peoples should establish a global fund to support indigenous languages. Such a fund might emphasize support for community-driven language revitalization projects, especially for those languages that are most critically endangered and for which no such projects exist. Other activities might include the recording of critically endangered languages and the compilation of good practices for language revitalization. Such a fund to support indigenous languages should be an exercise led by indigenous peoples that supports efforts to increase the number of fluent speakers of indigenous languages worldwide.

45. Such a global fund should be supported financially by States, the private sector, the United Nations system, civil society and other donors.

46. Indigenous peoples should proactively produce and disseminate literature and media materials in and about their languages, as appropriate, in accordance with their cultural protocols and traditions.

47. Indigenous peoples should establish informal networks or caucuses of individuals and organizations involved in promoting and revitalizing indigenous languages that would:

(a) Collaborate with the Permanent Forum in following up on the implementation of recommendations put forward at the expert group meeting;

(b) Compile and share good practices and tools for language revitalization, considering the different needs based on the different situations of indigenous languages;

(c) Continue to raise key issues and concerns associated with indigenous languages on an ad hoc basis, including at the annual sessions of the Permanent Forum and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

48. The core of such a network or caucus could be formed by motivated participants of the expert group meeting. The Permanent Forum and UNESCO should endeavour to support such a group if and when it is established.

United Nations system

49. The General Assembly should proclaim an international year of indigenous languages. Alternative formulations, such as "an international year of endangered languages" or "indigenous and endangered languages", should also be considered. Such an international year should be proclaimed for 2018 or as soon as possible.

50. The General Assembly should also proclaim an international decade of indigenous languages, given that the revitalization of the world's indigenous and other endangered languages would require a sustained effort by Member States and indigenous peoples over many years.

51. A global award for language revitalization should be established to recognize efforts made to teach, revitalize, promote and strengthen indigenous languages in each of the seven sociocultural regions in order to give broad representation to the world's indigenous peoples. Such an award should be organized in cooperation with indigenous peoples and in partnership with civil society and the private sector.

52. UNESCO should collaborate with efforts led by indigenous peoples and by others to map indigenous languages, such as the Endangered Languages Project.[7]

53. As part of the implementation of the system-wide action plan for a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNESCO, at both headquarters and its field offices, should intensify efforts to promote indigenous language preservation and revitalization, as well as education in the indigenous mother tongue.

54. As a matter of urgency, given the critical situation of many indigenous languages on the brink of extinction, UNESCO should make the preservation, revitalization and promotion of indigenous languages a priority and initiate practical programmes to that effect, paying particular attention to those languages that are most endangered. As a first step, UNESCO should redouble its efforts to develop and adopt a policy of engagement with indigenous peoples. As early as possible, the

[7] The Endangered Language Project is a website containing the most up-to-date and comprehensive information about more than 3,000 endangered languages around the world. See http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/.

UNESCO General Conference should include the revitalization and promotion of indigenous languages as an agenda item.

55. Member States of UNESCO should re-engage in consultations on the development of an international standard-setting instrument to protect indigenous and endangered languages and should ensure adequate funding for that important exercise.

56. UNESCO should engage in meaningful collaboration on indigenous languages with the Permanent Forum, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples. UNESCO should also consider collaborating with NGOs and the private sector working on preserving indigenous languages. A public-private partnership to support indigenous languages on a global level could be a key driver of progress in that field.

57. The Permanent Forum should gather information regarding the use of modern technologies to preserve, revitalize and disseminate indigenous languages and draw up a manual of good practices.

58. The Commission on the Status of Women should consider the empowerment of indigenous women as a priority theme for 2017, in recognition of the important role of indigenous women as the primary transmitters of indigenous languages to future generations and in order to empower them for greater participation in decision-making and language revitalization, following up on the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and the relevant recommendations of the Permanent Forum in 2015.

59. UNESCO and the secretariat of the Permanent Forum should cooperate in producing a publication that compiles examples of good practices and methodologies for language revitalization.

States

60. States should recognize the linguistic rights of indigenous peoples and should develop language policies to promote and protect indigenous languages. Such policies should ensure that indigenous children are provided with quality education in their indigenous mother tongue, which would encompass not only language instruction but also an overall education in the indigenous mother tongue. Such an education should be provided by teachers who are fluent in the relevant indigenous language and in cooperation with indigenous peoples.

61. States should provide sustainable and long-term funding for language revitalization initiatives and organizations designed and delivered by and for indigenous peoples. States should employ relevant and knowledgeable indigenous persons to oversee the allocation of such funding and assess its use. When indigenous languages are critically endangered to a degree to which doing so is not feasible, States should provide assistance to indigenous peoples' initiatives to revitalize those languages, including by supporting full immersion programmes and methods such as language nests.

62. States should be informed of the urgency concerning indigenous language revitalization and in cooperation and consultation with indigenous peoples and consider granting official language status to the indigenous languages within their territories.

63. Indigenous languages are inherently linked to the intangible cultural heritage of indigenous peoples. While not constituting an "element" of intangible heritage under the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, much of that heritage is based on languages. Safeguarding such heritage also helps to preserve and revitalize indigenous languages. For this reason, States that have not done so should ratify the Convention as a matter of urgency and begin working on its implementation at the national level in close cooperation with indigenous peoples.

64. States should provide intercultural education for all, not only for indigenous children, thereby ensuring that non-indigenous peoples learn indigenous languages and cultures where appropriate. States should provide training in relevant indigenous languages for civil servants working in indigenous peoples' territories.

65. Where indigenous languages are spoken across borders, the relevant States should cooperate among themselves and with indigenous peoples to ensure the preservation of indigenous languages in accordance with article 36 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

66. States should ensure that indigenous languages are adequately reflected in censuses and other data collection tools, such as questionnaires, surveys and participatory assessments. Census-taking and related data collection methods should be conducted using local indigenous languages and employing local indigenous peoples, thereby developing the capacity of local indigenous peoples in those methods. Questions on language use should be developed in full cooperation with indigenous peoples.

67. States should promote job creation for speakers of indigenous languages, not only for educators but also for civil servants, health-care professionals and others who provide essential public and private services.

68. States should, on a regular basis, monitor the situation of indigenous languages in different spheres, such as medicine, education and science, in cooperation with indigenous peoples in order to ensure the development of high-quality linguistic and educational policies.

69. States should support the establishment of specialized indigenous language institutes or academies to conduct research and promote indigenous language revitalization and use and provide capacity development for indigenous language advocates.

70. States should support the use of indigenous languages by developing incentives for speaking and disseminating indigenous languages beyond schools and language revitalization centres.

71. States should ensure, through any legislation and administrative actions necessary, that archival recordings and collections of indigenous languages are made available to indigenous peoples and, where appropriate, returned to them.

72. The call to action of the truth and reconciliation commission in Canada regarding indigenous languages may be useful in other national contexts. States, including Canada, should examine methods of recognition and action, such as aboriginal languages legislation and language commissioners.

73. Recognizing the establishment of the office of the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, Canada, States should consider the establishment of indigenous language commissioners, ombudsmen or other such institutions that promote the use and revitalization of indigenous languages.

74. States are urged to cooperate with indigenous peoples to ensure the return of traditional place names in indigenous languages in order to protect the visibility and use of indigenous languages, as well as the historic memory of indigenous peoples.

75. States should promote the prestige of indigenous languages by supporting efforts towards standardization, including by establishing indigenous universities and promoting the use of indigenous languages in public and private administration.

Annex I

Agenda and programme of work

Date time	*Item programme*	
Tuesday, 19 January 2016		
10-10.30 a.m.		Opening of the workshop by the Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development
	Item 1	Election of the Chair and the Rapporteur
	Item 2	Adoption of the programme of work
10.30 a.m.-1 p.m.		*Opening presentations*
		Megan Davis, Chair
		Oliver Loode
		Grand Chief Edward John
	Item 3	Context and characteristics of indigenous languages
		(a) Role of language in indigenous cultures
		(b) Importance of ensuring the survival of indigenous languages
		(c) Role of indigenous peoples' communities, in particular indigenous women's role in the transmission of their languages to future generations
		(d) Revitalization of indigenous peoples' cultures and communities in urban contexts through indigenous languages
		Presentations
		Alexey Tsykarev, Chair, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
		Elisa Loncon Antileo
		General discussion
3-6 p.m.	Item 3	*Presentation*
		Sandra Inutiq
		General discussion
	Item 4	Initiatives and strategies undertaken for, with and by indigenous peoples to recover, use, revitalize and disseminate indigenous languages
		(a) Sharing examples of initiatives and strategies

Date time	*Item programme*	
		(b) Sharing examples of the use of information and communication technologies
		(i) Media: television broadcasting, filmmaking and videomaking, community radio and journalism
		(ii) Web tools and digital media: multilingual platforms, free software, gaming apps and mobile apps
		(c) Best results and what has not worked well
		(d) How to raise awareness of these initiatives and strategies
		(e) How to increase the use of these initiatives and strategies by indigenous peoples and the broader societies in which they live
		(f) Lessons learned from initiatives and strategies to recover, use, revitalize and disseminate non-indigenous languages
		Presentations
		Amy D. Kalili
		Richard Grounds
		General discussion
Wednesday, 20 January 2016		
10 a.m.-1 p.m.	Item 4	*Presentations*
		Craig Cornelius
		Tatiana Degai
		Alberto Muenala
		Thierre Kranzer
		General discussion
3-6 p.m.	Item 5	**Lessons learned from State educational systems to strengthen or accommodate indigenous languages**
		(a) Experiences of State education systems in strengthening indigenous languages
		(b) Impact of bilingual education at elementary and secondary levels
		(c) Good practices in and challenges to developing curriculum and educational texts in indigenous languages
		(d) Role and impact of language standardization on indigenous languages

Date time	*Item programme*	
		(e) Other mechanisms that exist within States, such as interpretation in judicial and/or administrative proceedings and access to public documents and information in indigenous languages
		Presentations
		Mathura Bikash Tripura
		Luis Enrique Lopez
		Chief Wilton Littlechild, member, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Thursday, 21 January 2016		
10 a.m.-1 p.m.	Item 5	General discussion
	Item 6	**What more can be done to support the survival, revitalization, use and promotion of indigenous languages?**
		(a) Actions, not just documenting or archiving, to be taken to increase the number of fluent speakers of the most critically endangered languages
		(b) Kind of support provided, both finically and otherwise, to support the survival, revitalization, use and promotion of indigenous languages
		(c) What the United Nations system is doing to address this issue and how its work can be strengthened
		General discussion
3-6 p.m.	Item 6	*Recorded video messages*
		Eddie Avila, indigenous language digital activist
		Renata Flores Rivera, Asociación Cultural Surca
	Item 7	Adoption of the conclusions and recommendations
		Closing remarks by the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Annex II

List of participants

Members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Megan Davis, Chair

Dalee Sambo Dorough

Edward John

Oliver Loode

Aisa B. Mukabenova

Mohammad Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi

Invited experts

Mathura Bikash Tripura (Asia)

Tatiana Degai (Eastern Europe, Russian Federation, Central Asia and Transcaucasia)

Richard Grounds (North America)

Sandra Inutiq (Arctic)

Amy D. Kalili (Pacific)

Elisa Loncon Antileo (Central and South America and the Caribbean)

Alexey Tsykarev, Chair, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Wilton Littlechild, Member, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Francisco Cali Tzay, Chair, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

United Nations system

International Fund for Agricultural Development

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Non-governmental organizations and academic institutions

American Indian Law Alliance

Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory

Assembly of First Nations

Associação Indígena Mavutsinin

Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums

Bolivian Anthropologist Network of New York University

Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, New York University

Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility

College at Brockport, State University of New York

Cree Nation Government

Dirección Nacional de Tierras Indígenas de la Autoridad Nacional de Administración de Tierras de Panamá

Educational Linguistics and Language Rights Advocacy

Endangered Language Alliance

Enoch Cree Nation

First Languages Australia

First Peoples' Cultural Council

Indigenous World Association

International Indian Treaty Council

International Native Tradition Interchange

Kahnawake Education Center

Kichwa Hatari

Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People

Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre

Ochapowace Nation

Oglala Lakota College

SIL Internacional

Teachers College, Columbia University

Tribal Link Foundation

States

Australia

Argentina

Bangladesh

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)

Brazil

Canada

Chile

Colombia

Cuba

Denmark

Ecuador

El Salvador

Finland

Guatemala

Japan

Mexico

Myanmar

New Zealand

Norway

Panama

Russian Federation

United States of America

Annex III

List of documents

Concept note

Programme of work for the expert group meeting

Paper submitted by Mathura Bikash Tripura

Paper submitted by Tatiana Degai

Paper submitted by Richard Grounds

Paper submitted by Sandra Inutiq

Paper submitted by Amy D. Kalili

Paper submitted by Elisa Loncon Antileo

All the reports, including other documents submitted during the meeting, are available on the website of the secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/.